

Patricia Beeman, MSW
March 18, 2016
Testimony before the Judiciary Committee
IN FAVOR OF SB 428
Re Funding for Legal Aid

Senator Coleman, Representative Tong, Senator Kissel, Representative Rebinbas and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Pat Beeman. I am a Community Outreach Coordinator at the Emergency Aid Association in Suffield, CT. I have been a Social Worker in CT for over 35 years, working in my current position for 11 years.

I have connected some of my more impoverished and vulnerable clients to Greater Hartford Legal Aid for consultation, advocacy and legal representation. Always, when clients were determined eligible for the services of GHLA they received excellent legal guidance and support.

I offer these Clients' cases as examples:

Ms. M was a young woman in her 20's from Moldova. She had overstayed her Agricultural Work Visa. She had had one child with a co-worker on the local farm, where she had been working for room and board. My client was being beaten by her child's father, had no relatives in this country and was afraid of deportation. She was reluctant to leave her situation due to fears of being deported without her child. Client was referred to GHLA. From GHLA she received effective information from an immigration law specialist with whose guidance she was enabled to apply for citizenship. This empowered the mother and child to gain independence from their abusive living situation. She is an American citizen now and is working full time on a dairy farm in New York where she lives with her current family.

Ms. P was a senior who had been caregiving for her Mother who was 99 years old and suffered from dementia, frequent incontinence, diabetes and high blood pressure. Client was living in Mother's home and was caretaking for Mother on a 24 hour 7 day a week schedule for over a year. Client needed hip surgery in July due to a fall. Her mother was transferred to a Long Term Nursing Home and deemed incompetent. When client had recuperated herself, she was notified that her mother's Conservator (an attorney assigned by Enfield Probate Court) had determined that her mother was to remain in the Nursing Home as her home environment was substandard. My client's siblings were accusatory of client as being abusive and financially exploitive to her Mother.

These accusations were unfounded, just hearsay. My client received a notice to quit her residence at her Mother's property, signed by the Conservator appointed for her Mother. Client was to be homeless, without income and unable to utilize any funds in bank accounts that she and her Mother had held jointly for years. GHLA attorneys have not only negotiated a stay of the eviction from her Mother's home but have advocated for my client's rights to access to her Mother whom she visits daily at the Nursing Home. Client now has her Social Security income and is in the process of applying for affordable rents for herself. She may not be able to care for her Mother at home due to the poor condition of the house but oversees her needs at the Nursing home. GHLA is continuing to advocate for client to retain some of the funds that she held jointly with her Mother pointing out that client would have received at least \$14 per hour for her caregiving and household management services she had given to her Mother's care.

The representation of those without resources, either financial or social is the mission of GHLA. That mission is carried out in a professional, efficient and empathetic manner. I ask that the funding for this embodiment of social justice in the state of CT retain its current funding as well as be considered for the minor increases it has proposed.

Thank you.